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**Written Testimony Supporting Connecticut State Commissions
House Bill 5044, An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures
for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017**

February 19, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is David McGuire. I am the Legislative and Policy Director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT) and I am writing to express support for the African American Affairs Commission (AAAC), the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC), the Connecticut Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, Connecticut Commission on Children (CCC), and Connecticut Commission on Aging (COA). These vital commissions need sufficient funding to continue to achieve their important mandates.

The ACLU-CT believes in defending, promoting, and preserving liberty, justice, and equality for all. By giving oft-marginalized communities a seat at the table in the policymaking process, each of these commissions help us to ensure that “for all” includes Latinos, Puerto Ricans, African Americans, Asians, women, children and older Connecticut residents.

On issues of discrimination, housing, healthcare, education, voting rights, and incarceration, these commissions are critical champions for populations that otherwise would lack a strong voice at the Capitol. These groups are necessary to ensure that community organizations, elected officials, state agencies, and others are informed about the challenges that vulnerable groups face and the impact that policies could have on these constituencies. The ACLU-CT views these commissions as invaluable resources.

Connecticut still has a long way to go to ensure that underserved populations receive the equal rights

guaranteed to them by the state and federal constitutions. The fact that disparities still exist between women and men and between minority groups and whites, and that our youngest residents and aging residents still face unique challenges, however, only serve as proof that Connecticut still needs these commissions.

While we understand that budgets are tight, we hope that you will continue to fully fund the commissions for this fiscal year and beyond.